

JEFFERSON ON THE MOVE



DAVID GRUNFELD / THE TIMES-PICAYUNE

This corner lot at West Maple Ridge Drive in East Jefferson remains empty. Although the 5 percent population loss was an average across Jefferson Parish, there were small pockets of more dramatic spikes and drops, data show.

*Census data show
the population in areas
that flooded took
the biggest hit*

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Joe Rault's neighborhood is emptier these days.

Northline Street in Old Metairie, once an unbroken parade of mansions, is now dappled almost as much with empty lots as it is with sunlight through the live oaks.

The blank lawns between homes are artifacts of the Hurricane Katrina flooding that demographers connect to Jefferson Parish's overall 5 percent drop in population between 2000 and 2010.

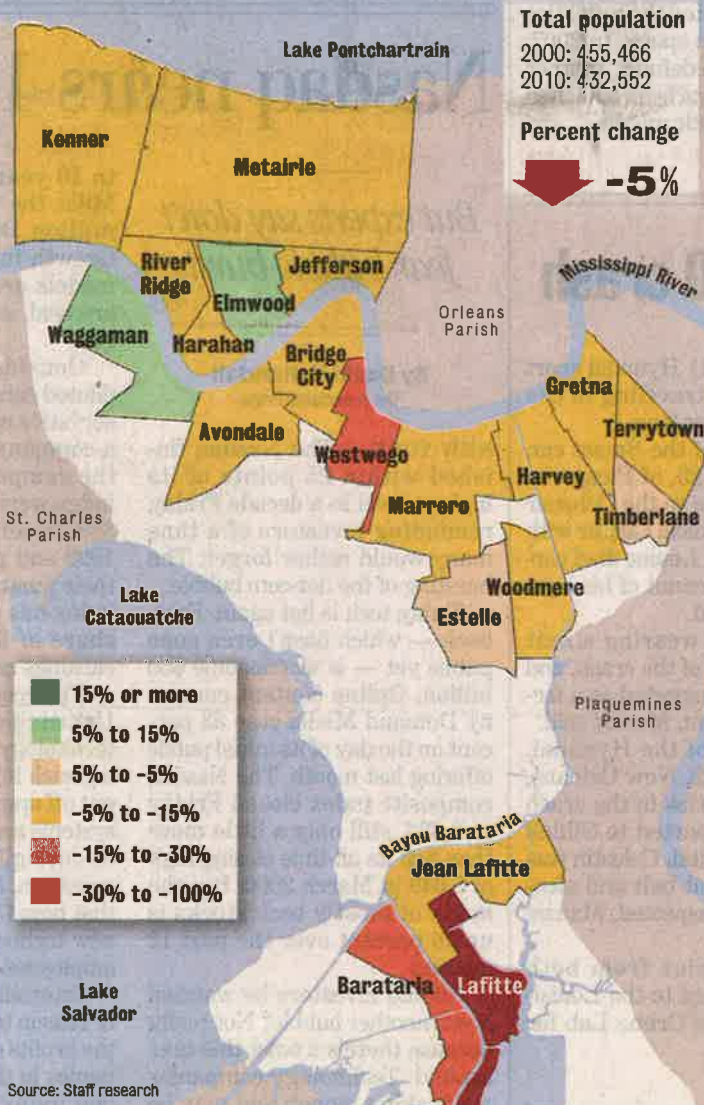
But there are signs of life on Northline. Scaffolding drapes the facades of several homes. And Rault, who moved to nearby Homestead Avenue after the 2005 storm and has been active in pushing for better drainage in the neighborhood, said he plans to rebuild his own home soon.

"It was always a very exclusive residential area with first-class houses, but yes, it's been slow in rebuilding," he said.

Rebuilding has been a familiar mantra across Jefferson. With its 432,552 people in the latest count, the parish has lost 22,912 in a decade,

CENSUS POPULATION CHANGE

Jefferson Parish, 2000-2010



See CENSUS, A-7

THE TIMES-PICAYUNE

West, east banks inch closer in population

CENSUS, from A-1

but that number would have been far larger had it not been for the parish's strong economy after Katrina, said demographer Greg Rigamer. One of the only convenient places for New Orleans residents to buy building supplies immediately after the storm was along Veterans Memorial Boulevard.

Rigamer said much of the population shift in Jefferson, small as it was, reflected those areas most affected by flooding after four major hurricanes in five years. West Bank towns such as Jean Lafitte and Grand Isle took hits, as did north Kenner, north Metairie and Hoey's Basin in Old Metairie and Old Jefferson, Rigamer said. Drier areas, such as Elmwood and Waggaman, gained slightly in population.

Rigamer's firm, GCR Associates, broke down the data even further, finding that Jefferson's populations on each side of the Mississippi River inched closer during the past decade. East Jefferson lost 13,719 to settle at 243,782. West Jefferson has 188,770 people, down 9,195, GCR reported. The net result is that West Jefferson came 4,524 people closer to East Jefferson's population.

Although the 5 percent population loss was an average across the parish, there were small pockets of more dramatic spikes and drops, the data show. For instance, the census shows the area of Lafitte lost 838 people and now stands at 2,875.

Mayor Tim Kerner of Jean Lafitte, a smaller town within the Lafitte census area, said he found the tally distressing enough that he plans to contest the results.



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A lot on Barataria Boulevard in Lafitte is for sale after the owners moved to higher ground after Hurricanes Rita and Ike. The census shows the area of Lafitte lost 838 people and now stands at 2,875.

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He said that if the numbers were to be believed, Jean Lafitte has more registered voters than population.

"Truly, then, what they need to do is come put us all in jail," Kerner said. "We're not losing people. We're growing."

Other areas saw population booms. Bent Tree Estates, a sleepy community in Marrero for the past 20 years, exploded in the past decade. GCR reported its population grew from 438 people to 1,063.

Amanda Fisher, president of the Bent Tree Estates Civic Association, said that was

mostly because of two new developments being built in the neighborhood. She said the boom has made lines longer at local stores but also adds to the vibrancy of the community.

"I can't say that there are one or two things that are different as far as the homes, atmosphere, etc., in Bent Tree, but I do see a difference in neighborhood involvement and participation," she said. "I love that Bent Tree is a 'small community' and there is one way in and one way out which eliminates cut-through traffic."

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